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Message Text

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, GE, GW
SUBJECT: HONECKER GIVES INTERVIEW IN WEST GERMAN PRESS

REF: 77 BERLIN 5385

1. SUMMARY: IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE WEST GERMAN PAPER SAARBRUECKER ZEITUNG, PUBLISHED IN THE EAST BERLIN PRESS JULY 7, GDR PARTY CHIEF HONECKER ANSWERED A NUMBER OF FAIRLY POINTED QUESTIONS ON INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS; BERLIN; RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL FOR EAST GERMANS; RIVALRIES IN THE POLITBURO; AND THE CONVICTION AND SENTENCING OF DISSIDENT RUDOLF BAHRO. HONECKER'S STATE-
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MENT CONTAINED NOTHING NEW OF SUBSTANCE ALTHOUGH THE TONE ON INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS WAS MORE POSITIVE THAN WE HAVE SEEN RECENTLY. AT THE SAME TIME, HONECKER RESTATED IN UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS THE GDR CLAIM TO THE RIGHT TO SPEAK TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

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2. EAST BERLIN PRESS OF JULY 7 CARRIES TEXT OF AN INTER VIEW BY ERICH HONECKER GIVEN TO THE DEPUTY EDITOR OF THE SAARBRUECKER ZEITUNG. WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN THE INTERVIEW AS PUBLISHED IN WEST GERMANY. FROM WEST BERLIN PRESS COMMENTS IT APPEARS THAT THE VERSION AS PRINTED HERE DOES NOT INCLUDE ALL THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN THE ORIGINAL INTERVIEW. FOLLOWING ARE HIGH-LIGHTS FROM INTERVIEW AS PRINTED IN NEUES DEUTSCHLAND.

3. INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS. A LARGE PORTION OF THE INTERVIEW WAS DEVOTED TO INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS AND RELATED ISSUES. HONECKER RESTATED THE GDR POSITION EMPLOYING THE STANDARD FORMULA THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FRG AND THE GDR COULD DEVELOP ONLY ON THEBASIS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING TREATIES, AND THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. RESPECT FOR SOVEREIGNTY, SOVEREIGN EQUALITY, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND NON-INTERFERENCE IS INDISPENSABLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CLIMATE THAT WILL PERMIT PROGRESS THROUGH THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FRG AND THE GDR. THE REMNANTS OF THE CLAIM BY BONN TO REPRESENT ALL GERMANS IS AN IMPEDIMENT TO COOPERATION, HONECKER SAID. HONECKER CONTINUED THAT IT WAS IDLE TO CONJURE UP "UNITY OF THE NATION" WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE AS SOCIALISM AND CAPITALISM DO NOT MIX. WHEN ASKED WHETHER HE MEANT THERE COULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

BE UNITY IF THERE WERE A SOCIALIST REGIME IN THE FRG, HONECKER REPLIED THAT THERE ARE OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED AND IN ANY CASE THIS WAS NOT TO BE INTERPRETED IN AN EXPANSIONIST SENSE.

4. HONECKER STATED THAT A MEETING WITH SCHMIDT WOULD MAKE SENSE ONLY IF IT CONTRIBUTED TO FURTHER NORMALIZATION BETWEEN THE FRG AND THE GDR. HONECKER SAID THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO CARRY OUT A POLICY WHICH SERVED THE INTEREST OF PEACE WITH ANY GOVERNMENT IN THE FRG. HE POINTEDLY NOTED HOWEVER THAT GREAT STEPS HAD BEEN TAKEN TOWARD NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN BONN.

5. BERLIN. HONECKER, IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BERLIN QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, STATED "BERLIN" DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE AGREEMENT BECAUSE BERLIN, AS THE CAPITAL OF THE GDR, WAS NOT THE SUBJECT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AMONG THE FOUR POWERS. IN THE FOUR POWER AGREEMENT, HONECKER STATED, ONLY WEST SECTORS OF BERLIN WERE SPOKEN OF. IN THIS CONNECTION HE ARGUED THAT THE CENTRAL PROVISION WAS THAT THE WESTERN SECTORS,

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WHICH HAD NOT BEEN A CONSTITUENT PART OF THE FRG, WOULD IN THE FUTURE NOT BE GOVERNED BY IT. HONECKER SAID HE COULD SPEAK AUTHORITATIVELY BECAUSE HE HAD WORKED CLOSELY DURING THE BERLIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET OFFICIALS IN MAKING THE GDR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE AGREEMENT.

6. HONECKER SAID THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT HAD PROVEN ITSELF IN PRACTICE AS IT PERMITS THE PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT OF WEST BERLIN AND REDUCES THE DANGER THAT BERLIN WILL AGAIN BECOME A SOURCE OF TENSION.

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7. ALTHOUGH NOT A SIGNATORY TO THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, HONECKER EMPHASIZED THAT THE GDR HAS A LEGITIMATE CONCERN WITH THE AGREEMENT SINCE WEST BERLIN LIES WITHIN GDR TERRITORY, ACCESS ROUTES TO BERLIN GO THROUGH THE GDR, THE GDR CONTRIBUTED TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE AGREEMENT AND LIVES UP TO ITS RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE AGREEMENT. IN RESPONSE TO

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THE POINT THAT THE WESTERN POWERS AS WELL AS THE FRG CONSIDER THAT THE AGREEMENT EXTENDS TO ALL OF BERLIN, HONECKER REPLIED THAT THIS WAS PURE TRASH. "THE FOUR POWER AGREEMENT CAN ONLY REFER TO WEST BERLIN." THE GDR, HONECKER WENT ON, HAD ALL RIGHTS IN BERLIN,
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THE CAPITAL OF THE GDR.

8. HONECKER-STOPH RIVALRY. HONECKER DISMISSED AS A JOKE A QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HIS RELATIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER STOPH WERE NOT PARTICULARLY GOOD.

9. INTERSHOPS. ASKED IF THE GDR INTENDED TO EXPAND THE NUMBER OF INTERSHOPS, HONECKER REPLIED, QUOTING HIS DRESDEN SPEECH OF SEPTEMBER 26, 1977, THAT INTERSHOPS SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A PERMANENT COMPANION OF SOCIALISM. THERE WOULD BE, HE STATED, NO FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE SYSTEM AND, IN FACT, MORE THAN 100 INTERSHOPS HAD ALREADY BEEN CLOSED AS AN ECONOMY MEASURE. HONECKER, HOWEVER, CONTINUED TO DEFEND THE SHOPS AS A MEANS OF DIRECTING HARD CURRENCY (WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE FLOW THROUGH "DARK CHANNELS," I.E. BLACK MARKET) INTO THE COFFERS OF THE STATE. IN A SIDE REMARK, HONECKER NOTED THAT IT WOULD ALWAYS BE POSSIBLE TO REIMPOSE TIGHT CONTROL OVER HARD CURRENCY FLOWING INTO THE GDR, BUT THAT THIS WOULD RESULT IN LONGER TRAFFIC LINES AT THE BORDER. SPEAKING TO VOLTMER, BUT OBVIOUSLY INTENDING THE WIDER AUDIENCE, HONECKER REMARKED THAT HE "COULD NOT IMAGINE THAT YOU WOULD WISH THAT."

10. TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS. HONECKER WAS ASKED HOW HE SQUARED THE REFUSAL TO PERMIT EAST GERMANS TO TRAVEL ABROAD WITH THE GDR COMMITMENT TO THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. HONECKER REPLIED THAT THE GDR IS BETTER THAN ITS REPUTATION, SAYING THAT CASES OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION ARE COMPLEX, OFTEN INVOLVING MANY FACTORS. TURNING THE QUESTION AROUND, HONECKER OBJECTED TO FRG ACTIONS, SAYING THAT SOME CIRCLES IN THE FRG USE HUMANITARIAN
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QUESTIONS AS PROPAGANDA AND TO INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE SOCIALIST STATES. HE COMPLAINED ABOUT MISUSE OF THE TRANSIT ROUTES AND SPECIFICIALLY OBJECTED TO THE INQUIRIES AT THE SALTZGITTER OFFICE.

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11. JOURNALISTS. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION CONCERNING FRG AND GDR PRESS ACTIVITIES AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, HONECKER SAID THAT SOME OF THE WEST GERMAN JOURNALISTS ACCREDITED TO THE GDR VIOLATE NOT ONLY THE SPIRIT BUT ALSO THE LETTER OF THE HELSINKI FINAL BY NOT CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD RELATIONS. HE STATED THAT HE HAS NOTHING AGAINST CRITICAL REPORTING BUT THAT CRITICAL REPORTING AND SLANDER ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS AND THAT GDR/FRG RELATIONS CANNOT BE NORMALIZED WHEN THE TRUTH IS CANCELED. HONECKER SAYS THAT THERE IS BOURGEOIS AND PROLETARIAN FREEDOM, CAPITALIST AND SOCIALIST, CITING THE FORMER PROHIBITION AGAINST THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PUBLICATIONS IN THE FRG AS AN EXAMPLE OF PRESS FREEDOM IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. HE CONTINUED THAT IN THE THIRTY-YEAR DEVELOPMENT OF THE GDR THERE HAVE BEEN MANY ATTACKS AGAINST IT BY ITS ENEMIES BUT THAT THIS HAS NOT PREVENTED THE STRENGTHENING OF THE GDR; THIS, HE SAID WILL ALSO BE THE CASE IN THE FUTURE. NATURALLY, HONECKER WENT ON, WE ARE NOT SO NAIVE AS TO THINK THAT WESTERN JOURNALISTS WILL REPORT THE TRUTH ABOUT THE GDR. THERE ARE IN FACT THINGS TO CRITICIZE IN THE GDR BUT THE ACTIVITIES OF JOURNALISTS ARE CONTROLLED BY REGULATIONS AND AGREEMENTS. LIES AND SLANDER, HE SAID, HAVE NO PLACE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF GDR JOURNALISTS.
12. THE FINAL QUESTION IN THE INTERVIEW CONCERNED THE RECENT SENTENCING OF DISSIDENT EAST GERMAN ECONOMIST RUDOLF BAHRO ON ESPIONAGE CHARGES. HONECKER MERELY

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REFERRED TO THE ADN RELEASE ON THIS CASE AND CLAIMED THAT ALL ARE EQUAL IN GDR COURTS. WITHOUT DEALING FURTHER WITH THE SUBSTANCE OF THE QUESTION, HONECKER STATED THAT IN THE FRG AS WELL LEGAL ACTION IS TAKEN AGAINST ESPIONAGE AGENTS. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO CRITICIZE AT LENGTH WHAT HE CLAIMED ARE NEW FRG ACTIVITIES DIRECTED AGAINST THE GDR INCLUDING THE ALLEGED ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW AGENCY FOR SPYING. IN CONCLUDING, HONECKER CITED THE RECENT REPORT IN THE LONDON "TIMES" CONCERNING GDR ACTIVITIES IN ANGOLA AND NAMIBIA (THE FIRST TIME TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THAT THIS REPORT HAS BEEN MENTIONED BY NAME IN THE EAST GERMAN PRESS) AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE MISUSE OF PRESS FREEDOM AND AS DAMAGING
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TO RELATIONS BETWEEN STATES AND PEOPLE.

13. COMMENT: HONECKER'S INTERVIEW CONTAINS NO DEPARTURES ON POLICY AND NO SURPRISES. HE WAS FAIRLY POSITIVE IN DEALING WITH INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS (NOT SURPRISING IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT PRIMARY AUDIENCE WAS WEST GERMAN). BY CONTRAST, HIS COMMENTS ON BERLIN WERE TOUGH AND UNCOMPROMISING. HONECKER TOOKSEVERAL QUITE POINTED QUESTIONS (ON TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, HIS ALLEGED DISPUTE WITH STOPH, ETC.) BUT GENERALLY TURNED THEM ASIDE AND GAVE NO ANSWER THAT IS LIKELY TO SATISFY ANYONE. END COMMENT. BOLEN

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